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# Urban Evangelism in India: An Evangelistic Project Conducted in the City of Poona

John Willmott

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Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

URBAN EVANGELISM IN INDIA: AN EVANGELISTIC  
PROJECT CONDUCTED IN THE CITY OF POONA

A Project  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
John Willmott  
August 1981

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URBAN EVANGELISM IN INDIA: AN EVANGELISTIC  
PROJECT CONDUCTED IN THE CITY OF POONA

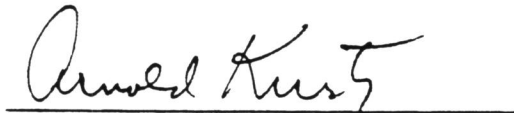
A project presented  
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Doctor of Ministry


by  
John Willmott

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8/2/81  
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## DEDICATION

To Mr. & Mrs. I. R. Thomas who taught by example,  
the value and the dignity of hard work, and to set  
Christ-centered objectives and goals in life. Also  
to Pastors W. G. Lowry, W. H. Mattison, and D. R.  
Watts who were my companions in the cause of evangelism.



#### NOTE

This Doctor of Ministry Project falls in a category described in the Andrews University Theological Seminary Bulletin as "Project II" in fulfillment of requirements for an alternate curriculum plan under which the candidate prepares two related papers--a theological position paper that addresses some issue or problem that exists in the church in a theological setting and a professional paper that addresses that issue or problem from a standpoint of ministerial practice.

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PART I

CERTAIN THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF EVANGELISM  
APPLICABLE TO THE INDIAN CONTEXT

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"Christianity is one of the oldest religions of India."<sup>1</sup>

The statement was made not by a Christian apologist, but by a non-Christian leader of modern India. The first Prime Minister of this great Hindu culture, Jawharlal Nehru, so affirmed Christianity's right to a place within the body of this country.

Tradition says that the good news of the gospel was brought to the shores of India centuries before it even penetrated the Western world, and it was brought by that disciple who gave expression to a basic and fundamental Christian confession, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Millions of Christians in India today, particularly on the western coast, trace their religious roots to the evangelism of the apostle Thomas and identify themselves by the label "Thomas Christians."<sup>2</sup>

And yet two thousand years after its advent to India, Christianity still remains an unknown entity to the main core of the population. "Jesus" may appear to millions of Indians a word to be

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<sup>1</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Discovery of India (New York: John Day, 1946), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup>Theodore Williams, Indian Missions, Indigeonous Mission of India, eds. R. Hedland and F. Krangkhumma (Madras, India: Church Growth Research Center, 1980), p. 2.

looked up in a dictionary, and not the "name given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).<sup>1</sup>

Why?

Even the historic sweep of modern missions has made only a marginal dent on the masses. Since Vasco da Gama sailed along the west coast the Roman Catholic church has sent missionaries with the Portuguese traders and colonists in the late 1400s and established work in cities and towns in India. The first protestant missionary, Ziegenbalg, came to the southeastern coast in 1706. This is the beginning of Protestant Christianity in India. William Carey and others came later in the eighteenth century. As of 1980, there are nearly seventeen million Christians settled everywhere, with specific concentration in the south and northeastern parts of the country.<sup>2</sup> Major protestant organizations were at work for over 250 years. The Bible was available in the major languages of the country for more than a century. The Seventh-day Adventist church with its global outreach structure, a centralized budget, a visionary leadership, a meticulous organization, and committed missionaries, has a tradition of nearly one hundred years. Yet, what are the results?

The Christian influence today is mostly secular. The church is known for its schools, its hospitals, its welfare work. The Indian leaders and their children from every walk of life--from politics to commerce to industry--pride themselves in sending their

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<sup>1</sup>Ken Newton, Glimpses of Indian Church History (Bombay: Gospel Literature Service, 1975), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Census of India, 1981 (New Dehli, India: Government of India Publication, 1981).

children to Christian schools. They are never afraid that their children are going to be converted to Christ: seldom they are! The prime thrust of the Christian church--to make the Cross a point of decision to people who come to the church--seems to have been blunted throughout the history of the Christian church in India. Evangelism has seldom been the watchword of the church in India. If there was a watchword at all, it was not evangelism, but enlightenment; it was not the message of the Cross, but the "massage" of ideological and theological relativism.

The Seventh-day Adventist church position is not much better off. It is true that the church has made great strides in its eighty-year-old history. The Christian schools provided by the church's education program have contributed greatly to the evangelistic thrust of the church. The report of the Seventh-day Adventist church in India, given recently at the Dallas World Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, contains this statement:

For more than 50 years, until 1960, the growth in membership was measurable in terms of hundreds each year. Thereafter, increases have had to be counted in thousands. For example, during the past 20 years period membership has risen from about 22,000 to more than 100,000 to day. This represents an increase of 351%, or a growth factor of four and one-half times within this period (nearly double the average growth rate of the world church during the same period). A graph representing this growth rate would run almost in a straight diagonal line upward, at a 45-degree angle.

Vast opportunities present themselves in Southern Asia to preach the gospel of the soon-coming Saviour. There is an awakening to spiritual need among both Christian and non-Christian alike.<sup>1</sup>

And yet, ask anyone in the streets, in the bazaars, in the trains, in the buses, in the restaurants of India as to who Seventh-

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<sup>1</sup>Roscoe S. Lowry, "A Staggering Challenge," Review and Herald, April 24, 1980, p. 30.



day Adventists are; it is doubtless if one in a 100,000 will know. Current statistics show that one in 9,118 is a Seventh-day Adventist,<sup>1</sup> and even that one may be a poor, weak Christian who, for one reason or other, has taken the name of "Adventist" sometime in his brief history. Moreover, statistics have a way of turning a whisper into a shout!

What has gone wrong with evangelism? What has gone wrong with the central mission of the Christian church, particularly the Seventh-day Adventist church, in India? Why is the cause of God not moving forward? Why cannot we say, as it was said of the apostolic times, that India is turned "upside down" by the evangelistic program of the church?

The problem is even more acute when it is realized that there are 3,000 cities and towns, and over 550,000 villages<sup>2</sup> where there is not even a shadow of the church's presence. And these geographical entities have within them 683,810,051 precious souls for whom Christ died.<sup>3</sup> The challenge increases as a consequence of the population explosion wherein for every person who accepts the cross, 1,500 to

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<sup>1</sup>According to 1981 Census it is one in 9,118.

<sup>2</sup>Time of India Directory and Year Book, 1977, ed. Sham Lak (Bombay: The Times of India Press, 1977), p. 8.. It represented fifteen major languages and 1,652 dialects.

<sup>3</sup>1981 Census, Times of India, March 19, 1981, p. 1. The 1971 figure is 547,917,809.

2,000 new persons are born without any possibility of ever hearing the name of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the church stands out more clearly. It is the urban character of our world. Until recently urbanization was a typical development in Europe and in North America, but today it has become the common pattern of world development. In the world as a whole nearly 55% or some 2.5 billion people, live in cities.<sup>2</sup>

Indian cities are no exception to this. There is a tremendous need to understand the life and existence of the population who live in these cities. The gospel should be communicated to the needs of the people and should be relevant to the local context.

This project was based on the thesis that evangelism should grow out of a theological orientation relevant to the people who are the object of the evangelistic outreach. How can the challenge of evangelism be faced in India? The only safe plan is to discover from the Scriptures the foundational principles, pattern, and strategies for evangelism in the early church and then draw lessons and applications relevant to the Indian context.

The project had several purposes. First, it was intended to help the church to take a fresh look at evangelism in India and to ascertain how successful it was with respect to its expansion program. Where has evangelism failed in building strong communities of faith? Are there factors that could be isolated which will help in easing possible difficulties?

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<sup>1</sup>For details see report of Dr. Roscoe S. Lowry in the same articles referred to above.

<sup>2</sup>Gottfried Oosterwal, "A Church that Serves the World," These Times, May 1, 1981, p. 11.

Secondly, the project grew out of a burden that evangelism be given top priority in the church and that this emphasis be made prominent by the organizational leadership. The administration of the Southern Asia Division was interested in providing this renewed sense of mission and evangelism.<sup>1</sup>

Further, the project was born out of the conviction that evangelism required broad participation of believing members.<sup>2</sup> Traditionally, evangelism in India has been a "one-man-show." The members of the church remained as spectators while the evangelist carried the load. The project grew in my mind out of the conviction that evangelism cannot fail where there is adequate leadership involvement and where this involvement includes the members of the church.

Another strong undergirding of the project is the matter of communication. Since evangelism is the communication of the gospel and communication is personal, this project set out to engage in gospel communication which is personal and people-oriented. Evangelistic strategy is dependent upon proper understanding of the individual, social, and cultural context.<sup>3</sup> Communication takes place best in the atmosphere of need satisfaction of the communicant.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>G. J. Christo, "Build up, Built up, Prepare the Road," Southern Asia Tidings, January 1981, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>V. W. Schoen, God's Need (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Roger E. Hedlund, ed., World Christianity, South Asia, vol. 3 (California: World Vision International, 1980), p. 13

<sup>4</sup>David M. Robinson, Communication (Columbus, Ohio: C. E. Merrill Books, 1964), p. 3.

Are there needs that an evangelist must meet in his mission? How crucial are the diversified ministries of the church to provide this satisfaction of felt needs of the people in the community?

The study consists of two parts. Part I is in the form of a theological position paper dealing with Christian evangelism. Part II makes practical application of certain principles which were identified as being applicable to the urban scene in India.

## CHAPTER II

### THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF EVANGELISM

"Go"<sup>1</sup>

Just a simple word. In two little letters, it symbolizes heaven's direction for the Christian. It is a word spoken by the risen Jesus, commanding His followers to go into all the world--go wherever there is a person; go wherever there is need; go with the power of the Holy Spirit; go with the good news of the gospel; go until the kingdom of God is established once for all on earth. The command of Jesus is the germ for evangelism.

This chapter will present: 1) a definition of evangelism; 2) the relationship between theology and evangelism; 3) the foundation, motivation, and scope of evangelism describing the priority nature and mission of the church; 4) a need for the proclamation of the whole gospel by the whole church describing the leadership and laity participation in evangelism; 5) the theological concerns, the content, and the communication principles of evangelism, focusing on the discernment of needs of the people who are the object of evangelism with a view to commitment to Jesus Christ and His church on this earth; and 6) strategies for evangelism which take into account certain hinderances.

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew 28:19.

This chapter will also summarize and present certain theological implications for later implementation in the practical project.

### Definition of Evangelism

But what is evangelism? The concept of evangelism runs like a thread through the New Testament. The verb form euaggelizesthai appears fifty-two times in the New Testament; Luke alone uses it twenty-five times. The noun form euaggelion (good news) appears seventy-two times in the New Testament, of which at least fifty-four usages belong to Paul. Mark has seven references to this word. The bringer of the gospel, euaggelistes (from which we receive the word evangelist), is mentioned three times in the New Testament (Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5).<sup>1</sup>

A study of these references reveals that evangelism has to do with good news. What kind of good news? The New Testament suggests the following:

1. It is the proclamation of the good news from God and about God (Mark 1:14; 1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9)
2. It is the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14)
3. It is the proclamation of the good news of salvation from sin for all men (Rom 1:16, 17; Mark 13:10; 16:15; Acts 15:7)
4. It is the proclamation of the good news that must be

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<sup>1</sup>William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature (Chicago, ILL: The University of Chicago Press, 1964). pp. 318, 319.

personally appropriated (2 Cor 4:3; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Thess 2:14;  
1 Cor 15:1-3; Mark 1:14, 15)

5. It is the proclamation of the good news linked directly with the demonstration of the good news (Luke 4:18, 19)<sup>1</sup>

To summarize, evangelism may be defined as the good news of God's Word spoken to man in his present need for salvation from sin. That is ultimately the task of the evangelist and herald, and to this end he must be not only faithful to the message entrusted to him, but also dependent on the Holy Spirit who alone can glorify Christ and bring the heavens in touch with the living God.

Ellen White states that:

The whole body of believers need to be vitalized by the Holy Spirit of God. We should study, plan, economize and set in operation every means possible whereby we may reach and bless suffering and ignorant humanity. The light which God has given to us as a people is not given that we may treasure it among ourselves. We are to act in harmony with the great commission given to every disciple of Christ, to carry to all the world the light of truth.<sup>2</sup>

Evangelism is thus seeking out people, recognizing their need and ministering to that need. In other words, evangelism is God's word spoken to man's need by showing how the event of Christ meets every possible need in the human situation. J. I. Packer puts it forcefully: "To evangelize is to present Christ Jesus to sinful men in order that through the power of the Holy Spirit they may come to

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<sup>1</sup>David Watson, I Believe in Evangelism (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 27-35.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, In Heavenly Places (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1967), p. 317.

put their truth in God through Him."<sup>1</sup>

Evangelism is explosion. We are "exploded to explode."<sup>2</sup> The Holy Spirit plays a unique role in this explosion. He explodes Jesus into our lives to explode Jesus in the lives of others.

### Theology and Evangelism

The very definition of evangelism suggested above is in itself a theological statement because no definition of evangelism is possible without its theological implication. Any attempt to separate theology and evangelism is both futile and meaningless. The New Testament does not drive a wedge between the two. All efforts in evangelism must be grounded and rooted in the Word of God. Evangelism with a theological basis is sound evangelism because while theology provides the content, evangelism provides for the communication of that content. Theology provides the structure while evangelism provides the direction. An avoidance of theology in evangelism or suspicion of evangelism in theology is dangerous. The great concepts of God, man, sin, salvation, forgiveness, reconciliation, resurrection, and the second coming are all expressed in evangelism. Evangelism is theology exposed, expressed, and expounded. "Theology defines evangelism and evangelism describes theology."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J. I. Packer, Evangelism and God's Sovereignty (ILL: Inter-Varsity Press 1940), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Sunder Clarke, Let the Indian Church be Indian (Madras, India: Christian Literature Society, 1980), p. 52.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 90.



### Foundation, Motivation, and Scope of Evangelism

The fundamental blueprint for evangelism is the Bible itself. The Word of God supplies the content, the mandate, the inspiration, and the direction for service to the world. Without the Bible there would be neither the authority nor the inclination to engage in evangelism. With the Bible, however, all excuses for opting out of it are nullified.

The foundation of evangelism is God Himself. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). God loved this world so much to visit this planet through His Son.<sup>1</sup> This thought was rightly captured by the declaration issued by the International Missionary Council in 1952 which gave much impetus to modern evangelism:

The missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the true God Himself. Out of the depth of His love for us, the Father has sent forth His own beloved Son to reconcile all things to Himself, that we and all men might through the Spirit, be made one in Him with the Father, in that perfect love which is the very nature of God.<sup>2</sup>

God so loved the world. This meant that no man, woman, boy, or girl was excluded from God's love. His loving ministry reaches to everyone regardless of language, caste, creed, or living conditions.

The motive for evangelism is well summarized in the words of Jesus Himself: "As the Father hath sent me even so send I You."

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<sup>1</sup>For an excellent study on the example of Christ's ministry of visitation, see John T. Sisemore, The Ministry of Visitation (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1954).

<sup>2</sup>International Missionary Council Report, 1952.

The sending by the Father is an act of unselfish, sacrificial, outgoing love. Without such love, no "sending" by the Father would have been possible.

So is the "sending" of His followers by the Lord. Christ's command "Go ye" is a command born of love to a lost world. As the apostle states: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16).

God's love for mankind, man's love for God, and the consequent love of man for all mankind are the starting and empowering points of evangelism.

Out of this motivation, the scope for evangelism takes its own dimensions. Love is the motivation. The whole world is the scope--that is wherever there is a lost man or woman. Hence Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world" (Matt 28:19, 20). "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: (Mark 16:15)." "And the Lord said unto the servant, God out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:23).

This universality of the commission to "go," so prominent in the New Testament, was emphasized in the Old Testament as well, particularly in the prophetic literature. As John Stott asserts:

The God of Israel is no tribal deity like Chemosh, the God of the Moabites, and Milcom, the God of the Amorites. He is the living God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, the Ruler of the Nations, and the Lord of history. So even in the Old

Testament, in which God's judgment on the Nations is pronounced, the salvation of the Nation is also pronounced.<sup>1</sup>

But within the Jewish history, this universality was dimmed by tradition, tribal isolationism, and pharisaical exclusiveness. Instead of being torch bearers going to the nations of the world, the Jewish leaders expected the world to come to them. To quote John Stott again:

In the case of the Jews it was not so much one of mission (Israel going out to win the nations) as of Universalism (the nations being included one day). This centripetal missionary consciousness (the nations flowing to Jerusalem) was replaced by centrifugal missionary activity (the disciples going out to the nations).<sup>2</sup>

#### Whole Gospel--Whole Man--Whole Church

The content of evangelism is the whole gospel. It should be presented in an intelligible way in order to be understood by those who hear it. We are to declare the whole counsel of God.<sup>3</sup> The presentation of the gospel should be simple, but any attempt to reduce it or water it down to suit the different cultures and religious traditions should be carefully guarded. Failure to unite mankind affected by varied cultures on the basis of faith and doctrine may lead the church from gospel consciousness to social consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

Neither, however, should the gospel fail to address itself to the social needs of a person. The gospel should be addressed to the

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<sup>1</sup> John R. W. Stott, "The Nature and Scope of Christian Mission," Christianity Today, January 1980, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent study on how Jesus worked see Robert E. Coleman, The Master Plan of Evangelism (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming Revell, 1963).

whole person. Evangelism is a ministry to the whole person. Christ sets the example for us to follow in performing a Christian ministry to the whole person.<sup>1</sup> Evangelism is not segmented into social and spiritual aspects. The church has the responsibility to meet both physical and spiritual needs. It must be prepared to look at the value of the individual to God and not neglect the person because of caste, creed, or economic standing.

The Master has shown us the best way to spread the gospel. It is finding those who are in need and helping them. In so doing hearts will be opened to receive the distinctive Christian truths. One writer observes: "With unwearied patience and sympathetic helpfulness He met men in their necessities. By the gentle touch of grace He banished from the soul unrest and doubt, changing enmity to love, and unbelief to confidence."

"Love was exemplified in helping others, and then the love of the Father was explained in simple lessons."<sup>2</sup> This is to be a model for evangelism.

The whole gospel to the whole person. The whole gospel to the whole person by the whole church. The gospel commission is addressed to the whole church. According to the New Testament it is plain beyond doubt that the church is to be a missionary community. By nature this is her function, i.e., participation in Christ's

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Ministry of Healing (St. Helena, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., 1905), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Dixon, Door to the Cities (Washington, D.C.: Temperance Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1975), p. 12.

apostolic ministry.<sup>1</sup> "Our gospel came to you, you received the word, the word of the Lord sounded forth from you," (1 Thess 1:5-8). The gospel came to the Thessalonian church, they received it and passed it on. As a result, the gospel came to others who also passed it on. The whole church was involved in the participation of the missionary witness of the church. Maurice Wood's comment on the "wholeness" of the gospel commission is appropriate: "We shall never cope with those around us unless we see the whole worshipping family of God in the local church as a body of evangelists in that area."<sup>2</sup> Thus evangelism is "the most solemn, sacred work ever given to mortals."<sup>3</sup> "There is no other work of so great importance."<sup>4</sup>

Theological Concerns, The Content,  
and the Communication Principles  
in Evangelism

Having defined evangelism in terms of God meeting man in his need, and having looked at the love-based motivation and the universality--individual tension within the scope of evangelism--the question of theological concerns in evangelism presents itself. These concerns may be viewed from four angles: involvement, incarnation, liberation, and hope.

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<sup>1</sup>J. C. Hoekemdjik, "The Church in Missionary Thinking," International Review of Missions 41 (1952), p. 334.

<sup>2</sup>Maurice A. P. Wood, Like a Mighty Army (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1955), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, Counsels on Diet and Foods (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1938), p. 76.

<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9 (St. Helena, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., 1948), p. 117.

Involvement is the first concern. Evangelism began with God involving himself with this world through Christ. "God so loved the world. . ." Christ involved himself with man (Matt 9:35). The apostle Paul carries that point of involvement to its logical conclusion of complete identification with the people with whom the evangelist works:

And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law of Christ) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor 9:20-22).

The church cannot evangelize from a distance. If ways have not been found to come to know persons, how can one expect to evangelize them? Success in evangelism is dependent upon the church's involvement in the life of the community and the lives of most persons in that community.

The church is in the world to heal its hurt and alienation. The church is in the world to preach the gospel to the poor. The church is in the world to bind up the wounds of those battered by life and to proclaim deliverance to those held captives (Luke 4:18). When the church discovers that by getting involved it is continuing the incarnation of Jesus in the world, will have discovered the "why" of evangelism. Then the "how" of evangelism will naturally follow. Evangelism then becomes a matter of loving people without strings attached, loving the down and out, alcoholics, drug addicts, etc., and providing them fellowship that leads to freedom; loving people without distinctions and discriminations; loving people who

belong to minority groups or the suppressed and backward classes. Evangelism is loving people who are also rich and affluent in society. Evangelism reaches all classes of people in all levels of society.

Incarnation is the next concern. "As the Father hath sent Me, so send I you" (John 20:21) is the mandate for evangelism, and in the mandate is the model for involvement. The God who said, "Let there be light," could easily have said, "Let man be saved." But he chose not the distant, the uninvolved path of commanding the new man. He deliberately chose to become one with the blood and the flesh of man. "The Word became flesh" is the anchor of the incarnation of God with man. Evangelism, to be effective, must become the extension of this incarnation. When those who receive the gospel take legs and arms and walk in schools, hospitals, businesses and industrial plants, and through the streets and visit the homes of people, the Word really becomes flesh. It becomes a regular traffic pattern of real men and women with flesh and blood incarnating Jesus Christ in their personal lives and witness. Evangelism must penetrate into the world.

Liberation is the third concern. At the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus proclaimed His mission as one of liberation (Luke 4:18).

Indeed the church is in the world as a company of freed persons to show to the world that "If Christ makes you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

The gospel is a freeing power. It frees man from the burdens

of the past, the predicaments of the present, and the uncertainties of the future.

The proclamation of this freedom in Christ is what evangelism is all about. Evangelism is free persons telling others where they can find freedom from those things which have enslaved them. It is "one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread"--a statement popularized by D. T. Niles, a former missionary to India.

Hope is the fourth concern. Jesus came into the world to make bad men good, good men better, and sinners saints. That is hope. Moreover, the church looks expectantly for the coming Lord. The church is a pilgrim driven to the ends of the earth and driven to the ends of time by her eschatological hope. But that hope for the future is not just future. The future is now in Jesus Christ. It is a hope that in Jesus Christ one can do better than before, and it is a hope which includes our family, neighbors, and entire society. The poor can be uplifted, the naked clothed, and those who live on the pavements can find a house to live in. There is hope for the sick, the widow, the orphan, and a million others with no hope. The gospel has the answer to all ills of society. Jesus is the answer. He died to make it so.

The church exists in the world in order to make the world better. The church is in the world as salt, light, and leaven to make the world better. The church is in the world with Christians who are like Christ to show to the people in every place--cities, towns, and villages--the only Christ they can see--Christ in us. The church offers hope for the hopeless. The Christian church is filled with people who are incurable optimists. They believe that God is in



charge and the game is not yet over. He is going to make all things new. There is a new world coming. Evangelism finds its reason and its meaning in this hope.

#### Theological Content of Proclamation For Commitment in Evangelism

A proper understanding of the theological content of evangelism is vital to the concerns in evangelism just expressed and the methods and approaches we take to meet the human need in society. Problems in communicating the gospel should lead us to the need for a total grasp of its content. In fact, the content of evangelism should always control and guide the methods of its communication. This content may be looked at under the following concepts:

First, the content of evangelism is the gospel--good news about God Himself. It is good news from God, about God. He is the creator. It is "in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:26). We men and women are created to bring honor and glory to the Creator. We have been made to worship Him and serve Him. God's will and purpose were intended to be man's supreme delight.

Second, the content of evangelism is the gospel--good news from God and about God to fallen man. Through disobedience mankind became incapable of meeting the Creator's claim. He became a failure as a result of rebelling against God's authority. Though the predicament of man is that he is lawless, guilty, unclean, and helpless, in seeking to be "as God" he lost his original state where God had placed him. Man became more rebellious and is in a position where he cannot put himself right. This is man's predicament. Until we grasp the magnitude of the Holy God, we can understand neither the

the sinfulness of man nor the seriousness of sin.

Third, the content of evangelism is the good news of the gospel which tells of the God-Man. The gospel is good news about a Person. That person is Jesus Christ. Evangelism is to make it clear who Jesus is and what He has done through His incarnation, His life, death, resurrection. Evangelism is educating people to evaluate and interpret life in terms of Christ and to find meaning and purpose in life. Theory, doctrine, precept, and principle all have their place. But the key to all this is the Person. It is the Person of Christ and His love for man that prompted Him to take his place on the cross as a substitute and surety for man. It is only this that will draw sinners to Christ.

Fourth, the content of evangelism is the gospel--the good news about the redemptive act of Jesus Christ finding a responsive chord in mankind involving their faith, commitment, and reconciliation. Faith brings conviction; repentance effects a change of life; reconciliation restores unity and oneness with God; and loyalty expresses itself in faithful obedience to the Lord's revealed will. Evangelism teaches all things clearly to anyone who desires to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

The content of evangelism ever remains the same. It is the gospel--the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ. But "different persons, different nations and different cultures facing the gospel will find different facets of it more meaningful than others."<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>2</sup>Jacob A. Lowen, The Gospel: Its Content and Communication--An Anthropological Perspective in Down to Earth, Studies in Christianity and Culture, eds. John R. W. Stott and Robert Coote (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 120.

goal of evangelism is to communicate the gospel to man in the midst of divergent tensions in order to help him in his own context to appreciate and respond to the gospel call.

A missionary statesman recently asked Bakht Singh, the famous evangelist of India, what dimensions of the gospel he found now useful in witnessing to his own people.

"Do you preach to them about the love of God?"

"No," he said, "the Indian mind is so polluted that if you talk about love they think mainly of sex."

"Well," the missionary said, "do you talk to them about the wrath and judgment of God?"

"No, they are used to that," he replied. "All the gods are mad anyway. It makes no difference to them if there is one more who is angry."

"About what do you talk to them? Do you preach on the crucified Christ?" the missionary guessed.

"No, they would think of him as a poor martyr who helplessly died."

"Then what is your emphasis? Eternal life?"

"Not so," he said, "If you talk about eternal life the Indians think of transmigration. He wants to get away from it."

"What then is your message?"

His answer was: "I have never yet failed to get a hearing if I talk to them about the forgiveness of sins, hope, and peace and rest. That's the product that sells well. Soon they ask me how they can get it, and then I can lead them to the Saviour who

alone can meet their deepest longings."<sup>1</sup>

### Communication in Evangelism

Many words are used in the New Testament to describe the process of communication. As the believer engaged in evangelism in the world and in the church, many facets of communication appeared in the way they proceeded to carry out the Great Commission.

As they came in contact with those in the world, they "taught, declared, spoke, proclaimed, preached, testified, witnessed, exhorted, praised, reasoned, refuted, explained, demonstrated, persuaded, and gave evidence for what they believed." And as they gathered together as believers "they engaged in fellowship, broke bread, prayed, and praised God." They encouraged and strengthened one another, and reported and described God's work and blessings in other parts of the world. And when they faced theological, administrative or ethical crises, "they debated, wrote, implored, and admonished one another."<sup>2</sup>

A rapid scanning of the biblical book, the Acts of the Apostles, reveals that God was then using the church to draw multitudes to himself. This little band of believers may have wondered how they, with all their limitations, could fill an order of that magnitude. But along with the commission was the promise of power. Along with power they had in Christ an "unequated communication

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<sup>1</sup>George W. Peters, "Is Missions Homesteading or Moving?" Mennonite Brethren Herald, April 15, 1977.

<sup>2</sup>Gene A. Getz, Sharpening the Focus of the Church (Chicago, ILL: Moody Press, 1974), p. 164.

model."<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, Acts refers to the numerical growth of the young movement in the face of external and internal odds and opposition. Soon the followers of Christ numbered a few thousand (Acts 4:4). There are other passages which relate to continuing growth.<sup>2</sup>

There was remarkable geographic expansion in those years. For a time the gospel was limited only to Palestine, particularly to Jerusalem, with its overload of provincialism and prejudice. The vitality of the movement aroused severe opposition, exploding with persecution. The stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, triggered further persecution, and the Christian flock in Jerusalem fled for safety. As they dispersed they did not forsake their faith. Instead "those who had been scattered went about preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Persecution thus provided the impulse and the impetus for the extension of the gospel throughout the province of Judea and into Samaria and Galilee. Further persecution efforts sent a vigorous young Pharisee named Saul to Damascus to suppress any believers who might be found there. His conversion enroute added to the consternation of Jewish opponents and provided the Christian fellowship with its most dynamic leader. Under the aggressive direction of Paul the Apostle, the gospel advanced to fresh success in Asia Minor, then Europe, and finally to imperial Rome itself.

Christianity so moved the Mediterranean world of that day that in Thessalonica it was reported that these people "who have turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6) had reached their city.

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<sup>1</sup>For an extended treatment on the communication situation in Christ's ministry, see A. T. Robertson's A Harmony of the Gospels (New York: Harper, 1922).

<sup>2</sup>Acts 5:4; 6:1, 7; 9:31; 12:24; 19:20.

Christ, to live in and for the church and to live in and for the world."<sup>1</sup>

Thus in the early church, evangelism was a natural, spontaneous "chattering" of good news. It was engaged in continuously by all types of Christians as a matter of course and of privilege--the whole church with the whole gospel to the whole world.

3. The principle of people-orientation. In the early church, the policy was to go out to where the people were, meet them in their need, and make disciples of them. The maximum impact was made by the changed lives and quality of community among the Christians. They witnessed by what they were, did, and said. Their life, their actions, and their words had a message for those who came in contact with them. They reached out in love in order to take care of the needy and God provided them with the miraculous power to do the work.<sup>2</sup>

4. The principle of participation. In the early church every Christian was a minister of Jesus Christ. They took seriously the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The members were prepared to minister at work, at school, at home. Wherever there was a need God had a minister ready to meet that need. The apostolic church did not look at ministry in terms of an hierarchy of distinction between priesthood and laity. Gottfried Oosterwal's study on the meaning of laity brings out three forceful points:

First, the Bible uses the word laos almost exclusively in its

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<sup>1</sup>Ray S. Anderson, ed., Theological Foundations for Ministry (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 432, 433.

<sup>2</sup>Acts 3:2-8; 8:7; 9:33, 34; 9:36-41; 14:8-10; 20:7-10.

singular form. This points already to a very important view of the laity; it is one single and indivisible unit. The laity is like the human body, a comparison that is frequently made in scripture.

Second, the biblical word laity is nowhere used in context with other believers in the church (church officers, ministers, et al.), but with those who are outside the church. Laos literally means, God's own people.

Third, the laos are God's chosen ones, but for a special purpose "to proclaim the triumph of Him. . . . The service of all men to all people on earth."<sup>1</sup>

"Ministry is the job of every lay man."<sup>2</sup> "The lay person is a Christian under orders."<sup>3</sup> "The church is missionary and ministerial. They [the laos] belong to the church as breathing belongs to the human body."<sup>4</sup> "The whole church exists to serve the world."<sup>5</sup> "They are all at work and always at work."<sup>6</sup>

The priesthood of all believers is the one greatest single hope for the fulfilling of God's mission on earth. This does not

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<sup>1</sup>Gottfried Oosterwal, "The Role of the Laity," Focus Supplement, No. 23, Andrews University, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>John A. Kroncke, "Who are the Laity and What is Their Task," unpublished paper presented in Spring 1975 at Andrews University, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Howard Grimes, The Rebirth of the Laity (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 34, 35.

<sup>4</sup>Hendrik Kraemer, The Theology of the Laity (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952), p. 31.

<sup>5</sup>Francis Ayres, The Ministry of the Laity (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952), p. 31.

<sup>6</sup>John A. MacArthur, a sermon delivered at Moody Bible Institute, 1978.

mean that everybody is his own priest, so that no community is necessary; but rather that everybody must be a priest to everybody else, so that community is indispensable. Everyone was a minister in the New Testament and there was total participation.

#### Hindrances to and Strategies for Evangelism

This is not the place for a full scale analysis of the hindrances to evangelism. However, it does seem essential to mention certain crucial areas.

First, the early church preached the person of Jesus Christ and the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were very flexible in their preaching of the good news, but utterly opposed to syncretism<sup>1</sup> (mixing other elements with the gospel) of any sort. Many sections of the modern church, however, are far from convinced that it must matter whether one has Christ or not. Other religions, they infer, are nearly, if not quite as good, a way to God; humanists live blameless lives; and in any case, it will all come out right in the end--God is far too nice to damn anyone. Thus they tend to be syncretistic in their evangelistic categories. They play with syncretism.

Second, the early church made evangelism its number one priority. For them buildings were not of supreme importance; they did not have any during the period of their greatest advance. Today institutionalism dominates. Buildings seem all-important and their upkeep consumes the money and the energies of the members. Indeed, even the Word has changed meaning. "Church" no longer means a

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<sup>1</sup>Loewen, p. 127.



company of people. These days it means a building.

Third, the early church possessed an evangelistic lifestyle. The participation was total, natural, and spontaneous.<sup>1</sup> But today evangelism is spasmodic, periodic, and heavily dependent upon the skills and enthusiasm of specialists. While in the early church maximum impact was made by changed lives and the quality of community among Christians, much of today's Christian lifestyle is almost indistinguishable from that of non-Christians, and much church fellowship and witness is conspicuous for its absence of warmth and indifference.

Last, the early church was very open to the leadings of the Holy Spirit. In the modern church, however, managerial skills, committee meetings, evangelistic budgets, and endless discussions are thought essential for evangelism. Prayer and dependence on the Spirit seem often to be optional extras.<sup>2</sup>

Success in evangelism is not determined only by numerical growth and geographical expansion, not in terms of structures and strengths of institutions and organizations, its financial capacity, or its world-wide impact. True success is measured more by the way that evangelism is helping to change people and society. While success had attended God's church in the past, the question remains today as to what possible new methods or strategies we can implement to make the evangelistic ministry of the church more effective. What forms should evangelism take to meet effectively the opportunities

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<sup>1</sup>Acts 5:42, 8:4, 12, 25, 35, 40; 10:36; 11:20; 13:32; 14:15, 21; 15:35; 16:10; 17:18.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Green, The Early Church--A Lesson in Evangelism (Los Angeles: World Vision International, 1975), p. 11.

before us? Are there basic principles which apply at all times in all places which we may use as guidelines for effective evangelism today and tomorrow?

The answer is Yes, if the early church is any example at all for evangelism today. From the brief study of the evangelistic principles of the New Testament presented thus far, the following strategies for evangelism emerge.

1. Jesus-Centered proclamation. The Christian faith which exploded with transforming power across the first century world was centered in the good news of Jesus Christ. The spirit-filled proclamation of the good news was so profound because it narrated the mighty acts of God in Jesus Christ bringing salvation from sin, and death, to live a new life of liberation.<sup>1</sup>

Like the first Christians, the church today must preach a person--Jesus crucified, risen, reigning in power with His people. It must proclaim a gift--the gift of forgiveness, reconciliation, new life, adoption, and the Holy Spirit offered with the promise of eternal glory. It must look for a response--repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).<sup>2</sup>

2. A strong lay movement. Like early Christianity, the church today must be a strong lay movement. Local congregations must be responsible for the evangelism of the surrounding communities.<sup>3</sup> Lay witnessing is the cutting edge of communicating the faith.

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<sup>1</sup>Anderson, p. 648.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Green, Evangelism in the Early Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

"Wherever there are large harvests of souls, they are the work of a motivated and mobilized laity."<sup>1</sup> "Until the pastor and the church leaders are seriously committed to the lay ministry, the sleeping giant will slumber on."<sup>2</sup>

One author suggests that "the work of God on earth will never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with that of ministers and church officers."<sup>3</sup>

Effective evangelism today would be characterized by the recovery of lay participation in ministry both to build up the body of Christ and to be his witnesses and servants in the world. It is God's general plan that "community evangelism be carried out in the context of dynamic, and vigorous body life."<sup>4</sup> The Holy Spirit effectively communicating the message through human witnesses results in spiritual and numerical reproduction and geographical expansion.<sup>5</sup>

Evangelism should be a natural outflow of loving relationship between Jesus Christ and the believers. Where there is this koinonia there is provided the proper motivation to share Christ's love and grace with others.

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<sup>1</sup>Gottfried Oosterwal, Servants for Christ, The Adventist Church Facing the '80s (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Kraemer, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 9:221.

<sup>4</sup>Getz, p. 41.

<sup>5</sup>Vergil Gerber, God's Way to Keep a Church Going and Growing (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1973), p. 20.

# THE REAL TRUTH CRUSADE CONCEPT

## INTRODUCTION

The Real Truth Crusade concept is a thrilling, multifaceted program of gospel, health, music, youth involvement, and family enrichment. It is a wholistic strategy which involves conference leadership, pastors, church officers, men, women, and youth in a team approach to evangelism under the direction of divine agencies. Its principles are based on Christ's own model and method in soul winning.

In the book, Ministry of Healing, page 143, we find the following blueprint for successful outreach: "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'follow me.'"

## THE PRE-EFFORT PREPARATION

1. Approval/Endorsement of Conference and Local Church
2. The REal Truth Planning Council
3. Master Plan and Work Sheet
4. Timetable and Countdown
5. Spiritual Emphasis and Preparation
  - A. Personal Devotions
  - B. Prayer Groups, Prayer Chain, Prayer Clock
  - C. Special Time of Fasting and Prayer

illustrate these health lectures, appeared to contribute significantly.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps, where in times past our meetings have failed to attract many non-Christians, this method of presenting health-oriented messages may prove more effective in holding more non-Christians for longer periods of time in future campaigns.

Music appeared to play an important role. This aspect of the program encouraged participation and the use of songs and instruments which were culturally oriented. This seemed to be appreciated by those in attendance. It has been the practice of the church to use translated songs from the English hymnals such as "The Church Hymnal," "Gospel Melodies," "Christ in Song," and "Singing Youth." Although these books contain some inspiring songs, it must be understood that they lack their full impact when transferred to other cultures.

The following factors seem to have made a positive contribution in the evangelistic campaign: 1) Uplifting Christ in the presentation of the messages by means of simple, Indian illustrations, quotations, visual aids, and charts. 2) An emphasis on beliefs common to all Christians. 3) Low key presentations of teachings distinctive to Seventh-day Adventists without claims of superiority. 4) Attempting to explain the teachings simply and clearly without attacking other churches or religions. 5) Attempting to clearly place the options before the people, giving them the freedom to choose their own life-style or doctrine. 6) Patient and tactful answering of questions which people asked.

<sup>1</sup> Attempts are now being made in Southern Asia to integrate health-oriented lectures with the spiritual and doctrinal aspects of the Christian message and to communicate these messages through the use of slide projectors.